

Milton
Comus, a Mask :

(Now adapted to the STAGE)

As Alter'd from

MILTON's Mask

A T

LUDLOW-CASTLE,

Which was never represented

But on *Michaelmas-Day*, 1634;

BEFORE THE

Rt. Hon. the Earl of *Bridgewater*,
Lord President of *Wales*.

The Principal Performers were

The Lord *Brackly*, } { The Lady *Alice*
Mr. *Tho. Egerton*, } { *Egerton*.

The Musick was composed

By Mr. HENRY LAWES,
Who also represented the *Attendant Spirit*.

— *Quid vocis modulamen inane juvabit*
Verborum sensusque vacans numerique loquacis?

MILTON. ad Patrem.

D U B L I N :

Printed by S. POWELL,

For G. RISK, G. EWING, and W. SMITH, in *Dame-*
Street, and G. FAULKNER, in *Essex-Street*, Booksellers.

MDCCXXXVIII.

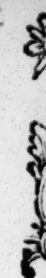


Dramatis Personæ.

COMUS	Mr. <i>Quin.</i>
The LADY	Mrs. <i>Cibber.</i>
The BROTHERS	{ Mr. <i>Milward.</i> Mr. <i>Cibber.</i>
First SPIRIT	Mr. <i>Mills.</i>
Second SPIRIT	Mr. <i>Hill.</i>
EUPHROSYNE	Mrs. <i>Clive.</i>
SABRINA	Mrs. <i>Arne.</i>
Attendant SPIRITS, BACCHANALS, Pastoral Characters, and other Vocal Parts	{ Mr. <i>Beard,</i> Mrs. <i>Clive,</i> Mrs. <i>Arne,</i> and others :

Dancers, &c.

SCENE a Wood near *Ludlow-Castle.*



On
In
Ab
W
Co



COMUS,

A

MASK.

The first Scene discovers a wild Wood.

The first Attendant Spirit Enters.

BEFORE the starry Threshold of Jove's
Court
My Mansion is, where those immortal
Shapes
Of bright Aërial Spirits live insph'rd
In Regions mild of calm and serene Air,
Above the Smoak and Stir of this dim Spot
Which Men call Earth, and with low-thoughted
Care
Confin'd and pester'd in this Pin-fold here,

A 3

Strive

Strive to keep up a frail and feverish Being,
 Unmindful of the Crown that Virtue gives,
 After this mortal Change, to her true Servants
 Amongst th' enthroned Gods on fainted Seats.
 Yet some there are, that by due Steps aspire
 To lay their just Hands on that Golden Key,
 That ope's the Palace of Eternity :
 To such my Errand is ; and but for such,
 I would not soil these pure Ambrosial Weeds
 With the rank Vapours of this Sin-worn Mould.
 But whence yon slanting Stream of purer Light,
 Which streaks the Midnight Gloom, and hither darts
 It's beamy Point ? Some Messenger from *Jove*,
 Commission'd to direct or share my Charge,
 And if I ken him right, a Spirit pure
 As treads the spangled Pavement of the Sky,
 The gentle *Philadel* : But swift as Thought
He comes——

The second Attendant Spirit descends.

Declare, on what strange Errand bent,
 Thou visitest this Clime, to me assign'd,
 So far remote from thy appointed Sphere ?

2d *Spir.* On no appointed Task thou see'st me now :
 But as returning from *Elysian* Bowers
 (Whither from mortal Coil a Soul I waded)
 Along this boundless Sea of waving Air
 I steer'd my Flight, betwixt the gloomy Shade
 Of these thick Boughs thy radiant Form I spy'd
 Gliding, as streams the Moon thro' dusky Clouds ;
 Instant I stoop'd my Wing, and downward sped
 To learn thy Errand, and with thine to join
 My Kindred Aid, from Mortals ne'er with-held,

When

When Virtue on the Brink of Peril stands.

1st *Spir.* Then mark th' Occasion that demands it here.

Neptune, I need not tell, besides the Sway
Of ev'ry salt Flood and each ebbing Stream,
Took in by Lot 'twixt high and nether *Jove*
Imperial Rule of all the Sea-girt Isles,
That, like to rich and various Gems, inlay
The unadorned Bosom of the Deep,
Which he, to grace his Tributary Gods,
By course commits to several Governments,
And gives them leave to wear their Saphire Crowns,
And wield their little Tridents; but this Isle,
The greatest and the best of all the Main,
He quarters to his blue-hair'd Deities;
And all this Tract that fronts the falling Sun
A noble Peer of mickle Trust and Power
Has in his Charge, with temper'd Awe to guide
An old and haughty Nation, proud in Arms.

2d *Spir.* Does any Danger threat his legal Sway
From bold Sedition, or close-ambush'd Treason?

1st *Spir.* No Danger thence. But to his lofty Seat,
Which borders on the Verge of this wild Vale,
His blooming Offspring, nurs'd in Princely Lore,
Are coming to attend their Father's State,
And new entrusted Sceptre, and their Way
Lies through the perplex'd Paths of this dear Wood;
The nodding Horror of whose shady Brows
Threats the forlorn and wand'ring Passenger;
And here their tender Age might suffer Peril,
But that by quick Command from sov'reign *Jove*
I was dispatch'd for their Defence and Guard.

2d *Spir.* What Peril can their Innocence assail
Within these lonely and unpeopled Shades ?

1st *Spir.* Attend my Words. No Place but har-
bours Danger :

In ev'ry Region Virtue finds a Foe.

Bacchus, that first from out the purple Grape
Crush'd the sweet Poison of mis-used Wine,
After the *Tuscan* Mariners transform'd,
Coasting the *Tyrrhene* Shore, as the Winds list'd,
On *Circe's* Island fell ; (who knows not *Circe*,
The Daughter of the Sun ; whose charmed Cup
Whoever tasted, lost his upright Shape,
And downward fell into a groveling Swine ?
This Nymph, that gaz'd upon his clust'ring Locks,
With Ivy-Berries wreath'd, and his blithe Youth,
Had by him, e're he parted thence, a Son
Much like his Father, but his Mother more,
Whom therefore she brought up, and *Comus* nam'd.

2d *Spir.* Ill-omen'd Birth to Virtue and her Sons !

1st *Spir.* He ripe and frolick of his full-grown
Age,

Roving the *Celtick* and *Iberian* Fields,
At last betakes him to this ominous Wood,
And in thick Shelter of black Shades imbower'd,
Excels his Mother at her mighty Art,
Off'ring to every weary Traveller
His orient Liquor in a Chrystal Glass,
To quench the Drought of *Phæbus*, which as they
taste

(For most do taste through fond intemp'rate Thirst)
Soon as the Potion works, their Human Counte-
nance,

Th' express Resemblance of the Gods, is chang'd

Into

Into some Brutish Form of Wolf, or Bear,
 Or Ounce, or Tiger, Hog, or bearded Goat,
 All other Parts remaining as they were.
 Yet, when he walks his tempting Rounds, the Sor-
 cerer

By Magick Power their Human Face restores,
 And outward Beauty, to delude the Sight.

2d *Spir.* Lose they the Memory of their former
 State ?

1st *Spir.* No, they (so perfect is their Misery)
 Not once perceive their foul Disfigurement,
 But boast themselves more comely than before,
 And all their Friends and Native Home forget,
 To roll with Pleasure in a Sensual Sty.

2d *Spir.* Degrading Fall ! From such a dire Dis-
 tress,

What Pain too great our mortal Charge to save !

1st *Spir.* For this, when any favour'd of High
 Jove

Chances to pass through this advent'rous Glade,
 Swift as the Sparkle of a glancing Star
 I shoot from Heaven, to give him safe Convoy,
 As now I do : and opportune thou com'st
 To share an Office, which thy Nature loves.
 This be our Task : but first I must put off
 These my Sky-Robes spun out of *Iris'* Wooff,
 And take the Weeds and Likeness of a Swain
 That to the Service of this House belongs,
 Who with his soft Pipe and smooth-ditty'd Song,
 Well knows to still the wild Winds when they roar,
 And hush the waving Woods ; nor of less Faith,
 And in this Office of his Mountain Watch
 Likeliest, and nearest to the present Aid
 Of this Occasion.—Veil'd in such Disguise,

Be

10 COMUS, a Mask.

Be it my Care the sever'd Youths to guide
To their distress'd and lonely Sister ; thine
To chear her Foot-steps through the Magick Wood ;
Whatever Blessed Spirit hovers near,
On Errands, bent to wand'ring Mortals Good,
If Need require, him summon to thy Side.
Unseen of Mortal Eye, such Thoughts inspire,
Such Heaven-born Confidence, as Need demands
In Hour of Trial.

2d Spir. Swift as winged Winds
To my glad Charge I fly.

[Exit.]

Manet 1st Spirit.

————— I'll wait a while
To watch the Sorcerer ; for I hear the Tread
Of hateful Steps ; I must be viewless now.

*Comus Enters with a Charming-Rod in one Hand, his
Glass in the other, with him a Rout of Riddous Men
and Women, dress'd as Bacchanals ; they come in
making a riotous and unruly Noise, with Torches in
their Hands.*

Comus speaks.

Com. The Star that bids the Shepherd fold
Now the Top of Heav'n doth hold,
And the gilded Car of Day
His glowing Axle doth allay
In the steep *Atlantick* Stream,
And the slope Sun his upward Beam
Shoots against the dusky Pole,
Pacing toward the other Goal

Of

COMUS, a Mask.

11

Of his Chamber in the East,
Mean while welcome Joy and Feast.

SONG, by a Man.

I.

NOW Phœbus sinketh in the West,
Welcome Song, and welcome Fest,
Midnight Shout, and Revelry,
Tipsy Dance and Jollity:
Braid your Locks with rosy Twine,
Dropping Odours, dropping Wine.

II.

Rigour now is gone to Bed,
And Advice with scrup'lous Head,
Strict Age, and sower Severity
With their grave Saws in slumber lye.

Comus speaks.

We that are of purer Fire
Imitate the starry Choir,
Who in their Nightly watchful Spheres
Lead in swift round the Months and Years.
The Sounds and Seas, and all their finny Drove,
Now to the Moon in wavering Morrice move,
And on the tawny Sands and Shelves
Trip the pert Fairies and the dapper Elves.

SONG,

SONG, *By a Woman.*

I.

B*Y dimpled Brook, and Fountain Brim,
The Wood-Nymphs deck'd with Daisies trim
Their merry Wakes and Pastimes keep :
What has Night to do with Sleep ?*

II.

*Night has better Sweets to prove ;
Venus now wakes, and wakens Love :
Come, let us our Rites begin ;
'Tis only Day-light that makes Sin.*

Comus speaks.

Hail, Goddess of Nocturnal Sport,
Dark-veil'd *Cotytto*, t' whom the secret Flame
Of midnight Torches burns ; mysterious Dame,
That ne'er art call'd, but when the Dragon-Womb
Of *Stygian* Darkness spits her thickest Gloom,
And makes one Blot of all the Air,
Stay thy cloudy Ebon-Chair,
Wherein thou rid'st with *Hecate*, and befriend
Us thy vow'd Priests, till utmost End
Of all thy Dues be done, and none left out ;
E're the blabbing *Eastern* scout,
The nice Morn, on th' *Indian* steep

†

From

COMUS, a Mask. 13

From her cabin'd Loop-hole peep,
And to the Tell-tale Sun descry
Our conceal'd Solemnity.

SONG. *By a Man and Woman.*

I.

FROM Tyrant Laws and Customs free
We follow sweet Variety,
By Turns we drink, and dance, and sing,
Love for ever on the Wing.

II.

Why should niggard Rules controul
Transports of the jovial Soul?
No dull flinting Hour we own;
Pleasure counts our Time alone.



SONG.

14 COMUS, a Mask.

SONG. *By a Man.*

I.

B*Y the gayly circling Glafs
We can see how Minutes pass;
By the hollow Cask are told
How the waining Night grows old.*

II.

*Soon, too soon, the busy Day
Drives us from our Sport and Play.
What have we with Day to do?
Sons of Care! 'twas made for you.*

Comus speaks.

**Come, knit Hands, and beat the Ground
In a light fantastick Round.**

As they are going to form a Dance, Comus speaks.

**Break off, break off, I feel the different Pace
Of some chaste Footing near about this Ground.
Run to your Shrouds, within these Brakes and Trees;
Our Number may affright: Some Virgin sure**

(For

(For so I can distinguish by mine Art)
 Benighted in these Woods. Now to my Charms,
 And to my wily Trains, I shall e're long
 Be well-stock'd with as fair a Herd, as graz'd
 About my Mother *Circe*. Thus I hurl
 My dazling Spells into the spongy Air,
 Of Pow'r to cheat the Eye with blear Illusion,
 And give it false Presentments, lest the Place
 And my quaint Habits breed Astonishment,
 And put the Damsel to suspicious Flight;
 Which must not be; for that's against my Course.
 I under fair Pretence of friendly Ends,
 And well-plac'd Words of glozing Courtesy,
 Baited with Reasons not unplaussible,
 Wind me into the easy-hearted Man,
 And hug him into Snares. When once her Eye
 Hath met the Virtue of this magic Dust,
 I shall appear some harmless Villager,
 Whom Thrift keeps up about his Country Gear.
 But here she comes; I fairly step aside
 And hearken, if I may her Business hear.

The Lady Enters.

This Way the Noise was, if mine Ear be true,
 My best Guide now; methought it was the Sound
 Of Riot and ill manag'd Merriment,
 Such as the jocund Flute, or gamesome Pipe
 Stirs up among the loose unletter'd Hinds,
 When for their teeming Flocks, and Granges full,
 In wanton Dance they praise the bounteous *Pan*,
 And thank the Gods amiss. I should be loth

To

To meet the Rudeness, and swill'd Insolence
Of such late Wassailers ; yet, O ! where else
Shall I inform my unacquainted Feet
In the blind Mazes of this tangled Wood ?

Com. aside.] I'll ease her of that Care and be her
Guide.

Lady. My Brothers, when they saw me wearied
out

With this long Way, resolving here to lodge
Under the spreading Favour of these Pines,
Stepp'd, as they said, to the next Thicket side,
To bring me Berries, or such cooling Fruit,
As the kind hospitable Woods provide.
They left me then, when the gray-hooded Even,
Like a sad Votarist in *Palmer's* Weed,
Rose from the hindmost Wheels of *Phæbus's* Wain.
But where are they, and why they come not back,
Is now the Labour of my Thoughts ; 'tis likeliest
They had engag'd their wand'ring Steps too far.
This is the Place, as well as I may guess,
Whence even now the Tumult of loud Mirth
Was rife, and perfect in my list'ning Ear ;
Yet nought but single Darkness do I find.
What might this be ? A thousand Fantasies
Begin to throng into my Memory,
Of calling Shapes, and beck'ning Shadows dire,
And airy Tongues, that syllable Mens Names
On Sands, on Shoars, and desert Wilderesses.
These Thoughts may startle well, but not astound
The virtuous Mind, that ever walks attended
By a strong-siding Champion, Conscience.
O welcome, pure-ey'd Faith, white-handed Hope,
Thou hovering Angel, girt with golden Wings,

And

COMUS, a Mask. 17

And thou unblemish'd Form of Chastity;
 I see you visibly, and now believe
 That he, the supreme Good, t'whom all Things ill
 Are but as slavish Officers of Vengeance;
 Would send a glist'ring Guardian, if Need were,
 To keep my Life and Honour unassail'd.
 Was I deceiv'd, or did a fable Cloud
 Turn forth her silver Lining on the Night?
 I did not err, there does a fable Cloud
 Turn forth her silver Lining on the Night,
 And casts a Gleam over this tufted Grove.
 I cannot hallow to my Brothers, but
 Such Noise as I can make to be heard farthest
 I'll venture; for my new-enliven'd Spirits
 Prompt me; and they perhaps are not far off.

SONG.

SWEET Eccho, sweetest Nymph, that liv'st unseen
 Within thy Airy Cell,
 By slow Meander's Margent green,
 And in the Violet-embroider'd Vale,
 Where the Love-lorn Nightingale
 Nightly to Thee her sad Song mourneth well;

Canst thou not tell me of a gentle Pair
 That likest thy Narcissus are?

B

O! if

And

O! if thou have

Hid them in some flow'ry Cave,

Tell me but where,

Sweet Queen of Parly, Daughter of the Sphere;

So may'st thou be translated to the Skies,

And give resounding Grace to all Heav'n's Harmonies.

Com. Aside.] Can any mortal Mixture of Earth's
Mould

Breathe such divine inchanting Ravishment?

Sure something holy lodges in that Breast,

And with these Raptures moves the vocal Air

To testify his hidden Residence;

How sweetly did they float upon the Wings

Of Silence through the empty-vaulted Night,

At every Fall smoothing the Raven-down

Of Darkness, till it smil'd: I have oft heard

My Mother *Circe* with the *Sirens* three

Amidst the flow'ry-kirtled *Naiades*,

Culling their potent Herbs and baleful Drugs,

Who, as they sung, would take the prison'd Soul,

And lap it in *Elysium*; *Scylla* wept,

And chid her barking Waves into Attention,

And fell *Charybdis* murmur'd soft Applause:

Yet they in pleasing Slumber lull'd the Sense,

'And in sweet Madness robb'd it of itself.

But such a sacred, and home-felt Delight,

Such sober Certainty of waking Bliss

I never heard till now. ——— I'll speak to her,

And she shall be my Queen. Hail, foreign Won-
der,

Whom

COMUS, a Mask. 19

Whom certain these rough Shades did never breed ;
Unless the Goddess that in rural Shrine
Dwell'd here with *Pan*, or *Silvan*, by blest Song
Forbidding every bleak unkindly Fog
To touch the prosperous Growth of this tall Wood.

Lady. Nay, gentle Shepherd, ill is lost that Praise,
That is address'd to unattending Ears :
Not any Boast of Skill, but extreme Shift
How to regain my sever'd Company,
Compell'd me to awake the courteous Eccho,
To give me Answer from her mossy Couch.

Com. What Chance, good Lady, hath bereft you
thus ?

Lady. Dim Darknes, and this leafy Labyrinth.

Com. Could that divide you from near-ushering
Guides ?

Lady. They left me weary on a grassy Turf.

Com. By Falshood, or Discourtesy, or why ?

Lady. To seek i' th' Valley some cool friendly
Spring.

Com. And left your fair Side all unguarded,
Lady ?

Lady. They were but twain, and purpos'd quick
Return.

Com. Perhaps forestalling Night prevented them ?

Lady. How easy my Misfortune is to hit !

Com. Imports their Loss, beside the present Need ?

Lady. No less than if I should my Brother lose.

Com. Were they of manly Prime, or youthful
Bloom ?

Lady. As smooth as *Hebe's* their unrazor'd Lips.

Com. Two such I saw, what Time the labour'd
Ox

In his loose Traces from the Furrow came,
 And the tir'd Hedger at his Supper sat;
 I saw them under a green mantling Vine,
 That crawls along the Side of yon small Hill,
 Plucking ripe Clusters from the tender Shoots;
 Their Port was more than human, as they stood:
 I took it for a Fairy Vision
 Of some gay Creatures of the Element,
 That in the Colours of the Rainbow live,
 And play i' th' plaited Clouds. I was awe-struck,
 And, as I pass'd, I worshipp'd; if those you seek,
 It were a Journey like the Path to Heav'n,
 To help you find them.

Lady. Gentle Villager,

What readiest Way would bring me to that Place?

Com. Due West it rises from this shrubby Point.

Lady. To find out that, good Shepherd, I suppose

In such a scant Allowance of Star-light,
 Would over-task the best Land-Pilot's Art,
 Without the sure Guess of well-practis'd Feet.

Com. I know each Lane, and every Alley Green,
 Dingle, or bushy Dell of this wild Wood,
 And every bosky Bourn from Side to Side,
 My daily Walks and ancient Neighbourhood;
 And if your stray Attendance be yet lodg'd,
 Or shroud within these Limits, I shall know
 'Ere Morrow wake, or the low-roosted Lark
 From her thatch'd Pallat rowse: If otherwise,
 I can conduct you, Lady, to a low
 But loyal Cottage, where you may be safe
 Till further Quest.

Lady.

COMUS, a Mask. 21

Lady. Shepherd, I take thy Word,
And trust thy honest-offer'd Courtesy,
Which oft is sooner found in lowly Sheds
With smoaky Rafter, than in Tap'stry Halls
And Courts of Princes, where it first was nam'd,
And yet is most pretended: In a Place
Less warranted than this, or less secure,
I cannot be, that I should fear to change it:
Eye me, bless'd Providence, and square my Trial
To my proportion'd Strength. Shepherd, lead on.
[*Exeunt.*]

Enter Comus's Crew from behind the Trees.

SONG. *By a Man.*

I.

FLY swiftly, ye Minutes, till Comus receive
The nameless soft Transports, that Beauty can
give;

The Bowl's frolick Joys let him teach her to prove,
And she in return yield the Raptures of Love.

II.

Without Love and Wine Wit and Beauty are vain,
All Grandeur insipid, and Riches a Pain,

22 COMUS, a Mask.

*The most splendid Palace grows dark as the Grave ;
Love and Wine give, ye Gods ! or take back what
you gave.*

CHORUS.

*Away, away, away,
To Comus' Court repair ;
There Night out-shines the Day,
There yields the melting Fair.*

End of the First Act.

A C T

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A C T II.

Enter the two Brothers.

Eldest Brother.

U N MUFFLE, ye faint Stars; and thou, fair
 Moon,
 That won'tst to love the Traveller's Be-
 nizon,
 Stoop thy pale Visage through an Amber Cloud,
 And disinherit *Chaos*, that reigns here
 In double Night of Darkness, and of Shades:
 Or if your Influence be quite damm'd up
 With black usurping Mists, some gentle Taper,
 Tho' a Rush-Candle, from the Wicker-hole
 Of some Clay Habitation, visit us
 With thy long levell'd Rule of streaming Light;
 And thou shall be our Star of *Arcady*,
 Or *Tyrian* Cynosure.

B 4

Y. Brother.

Y. Brother. Or if our Eyes

Be barr'd that Happiness, might we but hear
 The folded Flocks penn'd in their watled Cottts,
 Or Sound of Pastoral Reed with oaten Stops ;
 Or whistle from the Lodge, or Village Cock
 Count the Night-watches to his feather'd Dames,
 'Twould be some Solace yet, some little Chearing
 In this close Dungeon of innumerable Boughs.
 But Oh ! that hapless Virgin, our lost Sister !
 Where may she wander now, whither betake her
 From the chill Dew, amongst rude Burs and Thistles ?
 Perhaps some cold Bank is her Boustee now,
 Or 'gainst the rugged Bark of some broad Elm
 Leans her unpillow'd Head, fraught with sad Fears.
 What if in wild Amazement and Affright,
 Or, while we speak, within the direful Grasp
 Of savage Hunger, or of savage Heat ?

E. Brother. Peace, Brother ; be not over-exquisite

To cast the Fashion of uncertain Evils ;
 For grant they be so, while they rest unknown,
 What need a Man forestall his Date of Grief,
 And run to meet what he would most avoid ?
 Or if they be but false Alarms of Fear,
 How bitter is such Self-delusion ?
 I do not think my Sister so to seek,
 Or so unprincipled in Virtue's Book,
 And the sweet Peace that Goodness bosoms ever,
 As that the single Want of Light and Noise
 (Not being in Danger, as I trust she is not)
 Could stir the constant Mood of her calm Thoughts,
 And put them into misbecoming Plight.
 Virtue could see to do what Virtue would

By

By her own radiant Light, though Sun and Moon
 Were in the flat Sea sunk : and Wildom's Self
 Oft seeks to sweet retired solitude ;
 Where, with her best Nurse, Contemplation,
 She plumes her Feathers, and lets grow her Wings,
 That in the various Buste of Resort
 Were all too ruffled, and sometimes impair'd.
 He that hath Light within his own clear Breast,
 May sit i'th'Center, and enjoy bright Day ;
 But he that hides a dark Soul, and foul Thoughts,
 Benighted walks under the mid-day Sun ;
 Himself is his own Dungeon.

Y. Brother. 'Tis most true,
 That musing Meditation most affects
 The pensive Secrecy of desert Cell,
 Far from the chearful Haunt of Men and Herds,
 And sits as safe as in a Senate-House ;
 For who would rob a Hermit of his Weeds,
 His few Books, or his Beads, or maple Dish,
 Or do his grey-Hairs any Violence ?
 But Beauty, like the fair *Hesperian* Tree
 Laden with blooming Gold, had need the Guard
 Of Dragon-Watch with uninchanted Eye,
 To save her Blossoms and defend her Fruit
 From the rash Hand of bold Incontinence.
 You may as well spread out the unsunn'd Heaps
 Of Miser's Treasure by an Outlaw's Den.
 And tell me it is safe, as bid me hope
 Danger will wink on Opportunity,
 And let a single helpless Maiden pass
 Uninjur'd in this wild surrounding Waste.
 Of Night or Loneliness it recks me not ;
 I fear the dread Events that dog them both,

Left

Left some ill-greeting Touch attempt the Person
Of our unowned Sister.

E. Brother. I do not, Brother,
Infer, as if I thought my Sister's State
Secure, without all Doubt or Controversy :
Yet where an equal Poise of Hope and Fear
Does arbitrate th' Event, my Nature is
That I incline to Hope rather than Fear,
And gladly banish squint Suspicion.
My Sister is not so defenceless left
As you imagine ; she has a hidden Strength,
Which you remember not.

Y. Brother. What hidden Strength,
Unless the Strength of Heav'n, if you mean that ?

E. Brother. I mean that too ; but yet a hidden
Strength,
Which, if Heav'n gave it, may be term'd her own :
'Tis Chastity, my Brother, Chastity.
She that has that, is clad in compleat Steel,
And, like a quiver'd Nymph with Arrows keen,
May trace huge Forests, and unharbour'd Heaths,
Infamous Hills, and sandy perillous Wilds ;
Where, through the sacred Rays of Chastity,
No Savage fierce, Bandit, or Mountaineer
Will dare to foil her Virgin Purity :
Yea there, where very Desolation dwells
By Grot's, and Caverns shagg'd with horrid Shades,
She may pass on with unblench'd Majesty,
Be it not done in Pride, or in Presumption.

Y. Brother. How gladly would I have my Ter-
rors hush'd
By crediting the Wonders you relate !

COMUS, a Mask. 27

E. Brother. Some say no evil Thing that walks
by Night,

In Fog, or Fire, by Lake, or Moorish Fen,
Blue meagre Hag, or stubborn unlaid Ghost,
That breaks his magick Chains at *Curfew* Time,
No Goblin, or swart Fairy of the Mine,
Hath hurtful Power o'er true Virginity.
Do ye believe me yet, or shall I call
Antiquity from the old Schools of *Greece*,
To testify the Arms of Chastity ?
Hence had the Huntress *Dian* her dread Bow,
Fair silver-shafted Queen, for ever chaste,
Wherewith she tam'd the brindled Lionsess,
And spotted Mountain-Pard, but set at nought
The frivolous Bolt of *Cupid* ; Gods and Men
Fear'd her stern Frown, and she was Queen o'th'
Woods.

What was the Snaky-headed *Gorgon* shield,
That wise *Minerva* wore unconquer'd Virgin,
Wherewith she freez'd her Poes to congeal'd Stone,
But rigid Looks of chaste Austerity,
And noble Grace, that dash'd brute Violence
With sudden Adoration, and blank Awe ?

Y. Brother. But what are Virtue's awful Charms
to those,

Who cannot reverence what they never knew ?

E. Brother. So dear to Heav'n is faintly Chastity,
That when a Soul is found sincerely so,
A Thousand livery'd Angels lacquey her,
Driving far off each Thing of Sin and Guilt,
And in clear Dream and solemn Vision,
Tell her of Things, that no gross Ear can hear ;
Till oft Converse with Heav'nly Habitants

Begin

Begin to cast a Beam on th' outward Shape,
The unpolluted Temple of the Mind,
And turn it by Degrees to the Soul's Effence,
Till all be made Immortal.

Y. Brother. Happy State,
Beyond Belief of Vice !

E. Brother. But when vile Lust,
By unchaste Looks, loose Gestures, and foul Talk,
But most by lewd and lavish Act of Sin,
Lets in Defilement to the Spiritual Part,
The Soul grows clotted by Contagion,
Imbodies, and imbrutes, till she quite lose
The Divine Property of her first Being.
Such are those thick and gloomy Shadows damp,
Oft seen in Charnel-Vaults, and Sepulchres ;
Lingring, and sitting by a new-made Grave,
As loth to leave the Body, that it lov'd,
And link'd itself in Carnal Sensuality
To a degenerate and degraded State.

Y. Brother. How charming is Divine Philosophy !
Not harsh and crabbed, as dulls Fools suppose,
But musical as is *Apollo's* Lute,
And a perpetual Feast of nectar'd Sweets,
Where no crude Surfeit reigns.

E. Brother. Lift, lift ; I hear
Some far off Hallow break the silent Air.

Y. Brother. Methought so too ; what should it be ?

E. Brother. For certain
Either some one like us Night-founder'd here,
Or else some Neighbour Woodman, or at worst,
Some roving Robber calling to his Fellows.

Y. Brother. Heaven keep my Sister. Again ! again !
and near !

Best

COMUS, a Mask. 29

Best draw, and stand upon our Guard.

E. Brother. I'll hallow ;
If he be friendly, he comes well ; if not,
Defence is a good Cause, and Heav'n be for us.

Enter the first attendant Spirit, habited like a Shepherd.

Y. Brother. That Hallow I should know ; what
are you ? Speak.

Come not too near, you fall on Iron Stakes else.

1st. Spir. What Voice is that ? My young Lord ?
Speak again.

Y. Brother. O Brother, 'tis my Father's Shepherd
sure.

E. Brother. *Thyrsis* ? Whose artful Strains have
oft delay'd

The huddling Brook to hear his Madrigal,
And sweeten'd every Musk-Rose of the Dale ?
How cam'st thou here, good Swain ? Has any Ram
Slipp'd from the Fold, or young Kid lost his Dam,
Or straggling Weather the pent Flock forsook ?
How could'st thou find this dark sequester'd Nook ?

Spirit. O my lov'd Master's Heir, and his next Joy,
I came not here on such a trivial Toy
As a stray'd Ewe, or to pursue the Stealth
Of pilfering Wolf ; not all the fleecy Wealth,
That doth enrich these Downs, is worth a Thought.
To this my Errand, and the Care it brought.
But O my Virgin Lady, where is she ?
How chance she is not in your Company ?

E. Brother.

30 C O M U S, a Mask.

E. Brother. To tell thee sadly, Shepherd, without
Blame,
Or our Neglect, we lost her as we came.

1st Spir. Ah me unhappy! then my Fears are
true.

E. Brother. What Fears, good *Thyrsis*; prithee
briefly shew.

1st Spir. I'll tell ye; 'tis not vain, nor fabulous,
(Tho' so esteem'd by shallow Ignorance)
What the sage Poets, taught by th' heav'nly Muse,
Story'd of old in high Immortal Verse,
Of dire Chimeras, and enchanted Isles,
And rifted Rocks, whose Entrance leads to Hell;
For such there be; but unbelief is blind.

E. Brother. Proceed, good Shepherd; I am all
Attention.

1st Spir. Within the Navel of this hideous Wood,
Immur'd in Cypress Shades a Sorcerer dwells,
Of *Bacchus* and of *Circe* born, great *Comus*,
Deep skill'd in all his Mother's Witcheries.
And here to ev'ry thirsty Wanderer
By sly Enticements gives his baneful Cup,
With many Murmurs mix'd, whose pleasing Poi-
son

The Visage quite transforms of him that drinks,
And the inglorious Likeness of a Beast
Fixes instead, unmoulding Reason's Mintage,
Character'd in the Face. This have I learnt
Tending my Flocks hard by i'th' hilly Crofts,
That brow this bottom Glade, whence Night by
Night

He and his monst'rous Rout are heard to howl,
Like stabled Wolves or Tygers at their Prey,

Doing

COMUS, a Mask.

31

Doing abhorred Rites to *Hecate*,
In their obscured Haunts and inmost Bowers ;
Yet have they many Baits and guileful Spells,
And Beauty's tempting Semblance can put on,
To inveigle and invite th' unwary Sense
Of them that pass unweeting by the Way.
But hark ! The beaten Timbrel's jarring Sound
And wild tumultuous Mirth proclaim their Presence.
Inward they move ; and see ! a blazing Torch
Gleams thro' the Shade, and this way guides their Steps.
Let us withdraw a while, and watch their Motions.

[*They retire.*]

Enter Comus's Crew, reveling and by turns caressing each other, till they observe the two Brothers ; then the Elder Brother advances and speaks.

E. Brother. Who are you ? Speak ! That thus in
wanton Riot
And midnight Revelry, like drunken *Bacchanals*,
Invade the Silence of these lonely Shades ?

1st Wom. Ye Godlike Youths, whose radiant
Forms excell

The blooming Grace of *Maia's* winged Son,
Bless the propitious Star, that led you to us ;
We are the Happiest of the Race of Men ;
Of Freedom, Mirth, and Joy the only Heirs :
But you shall share them with us ; for this Cup,

This

This nectar'd Cup, the sweet Assurance gives
Of present and the Pledge of future Bliss.

She offers 'em the Cup, which they both put by.

E. Brother. Forbear, nor offer us the poison'd
Sweets,
That thus have render'd thee thy Sex's Shame,
All Sense of Honour banish'd from thy Breast.

S O N G.

I.

F A M E's an Eccho, prattling double,
An empty, airy, glittering Bubble,
A Breath can swell, a Breath can sink it,
The Wise not worth their keeping think it.

II.

Why then, why such Toil and Pain
Fame's uncertain Smiles to gain?
Like her Sister, Fortune, blind,
To the best she's oft unkind,
And the worst her Favour find.

E. Brother.

COMUS, a Mask. 33

E. Brother. By her own Sentence Virtue stands
absolv'd,

Nor asks an Eccho from the Tongues of Men
To tell what hourly to herself she proves.
Who wants his own, no other Praise enjoys ;
His Ear receives it as a fulsome Tale,
To which his Heart in secret gives the Lye.
Nay, slander'd Innocence must feel a Peace,
An inward Peace, which flatter'd Guilt ne'er knew.

Y. Brother. How low sinks Beauty, when by Vice
debas'd ?

How fair that Form, if Virtue dwelt within ?
But from this shameless Advocate of Shame
The warbled Song harsh jarring Discord grates.

ist Woman. Oh ! how unseemly shows in blooming
Youth

Such grey Severity !—But come with us,
We to the Bower of Bliss will guide your Steps ;
There you shall taste the Joys that Nature sheds
On the gay Spring of Life, Youth's flow'ry Prime ;
From Morn to Noon, from Noon to dewy Eve,
Each rising Hour by rising Pleasures mark'd.

SONG. *By a Woman in a Pastoral
Habit.*

I.

WOULD you taste the noontide Air ?
To yon fragrant Bower repair,

C

Where

34 C O M U S, a Mask.

*Where woven with the poplar Bough
The mantling Vine will shelter you.*

II.

*Down each side a Fountain flows,
Tinkling, murmuring, as it goes
Lightly o'er the mossy Ground,
Sultry Phœbus scorching round.*

III.

*Round, the languid Herds and Sheep
Stretch'd o'er sunny Hillocks sleep,
While on the Hyacinth and Rose
The Fair does all alone repose.*

IV.

*All alone——and in her Arms
Your Breast may beat to Love's Alarms,
Till blest'd and blessing you shall own,
The Joys of Love are Joys alone.*

R. Brother.

COMUS, a Mask. 35

Y. Brother. Short is the Course of every lawless
Pleasure ;

Grief, like a Shade, on all it's Footsteps waits,
Scarce visible in Joy's meridian Height,
But downward as it's Blaze declining speeds,
The dwarfish Shadow to a Giant spreads.
Of virtuous Pleasure the Reverse is true.

1st Woman. No more, these formal Maxims mis-
become you,
They only suit suspicious shrivell'd Age.

*SONG. By one Man and two Wo-
men.*

L I V E, and love, enjoy the Fair,
Banish Sorrow, banish Care,
Mind not what old Dotards say,
Age has had his share of Play,
But Youth's Sport begins to Day.

From the Fruits of sweet Delight
Let not scare-crow Virtue fright.
Here in Pleasure's Vineyard we
Rove, like Birds, from Tree to Tree,
Careless, airy, gay, and free.

E. Brother. How can your impious Tongues prophane the Name
Of sacred Virtue, and yet promise Pleasure
In lying Songs of Vanity and Vice?
From Virtue sever'd, Pleasure Phrenzy grows.
The gay Delirium of the feverish Mind,
And always flies at Reason's cool Return.

1st Wom. Perhaps it may; perhaps the sweetest Joys

Of Love itself from Passion's Folly spring,
But say, does Wisdom greater Bliss bestow?

E. Brother. Alike from Love's and Pleasure's Path you stray;

In sensual Folly blindly seeking both,
Your Pleasure Riot, Lust your boasted Love;
Capricious, wanton, bold, and brutal Lust
Is meanly selfish, when resisted, cruel,
And, like the Blast of pestilential Winds,
Taints the sweet Bloom of Nature's fairest Forms.
But Love, like od'rous Zephyr's grateful Breath,
Repays the Flower that Sweetness which it borrows;

Uninjuring, uninjur'd Lovers move
In their own Sphere of Happiness content,
By mutual Truth avoiding mutual Blame.
But we forget: Who hears the Voice of Truth,
In noisy Riot and Intemperance drown'd?

1st Wom. Come, come, my Friends, and Part'ners of my Joys,

Leave to these pedant Youths their bookish Dreams,
Poor blinded Boys by their blind Guides misled!
A beardless Cynick is the Shame of Nature,
Beyond the Cure of this inspiring Cup;

And

COMUS, a Mask. 37

And my Contempt, at best, my Pity moves.
Away, nor waste a Moment more about 'em.

CHORUS.

*Away, away, away,
To Comus' Court repair,
There Night outshines the Day,
There yields the melting Fair.*

[*Exeunt, Singing.*

E. Brother. She's gone! May Scorn pursue her
wanton Arts,
And all the painted Charms, that Vice can wear.
Yet oft o'er credulous Youth such *Syrens* triumph,
And lead their captive Sense in Chains as strong
As Links of Adamant. Let us be free
And, to secure our Freedom, virtuous.

T. Brother. But should our helpless Sister meet the
Rage
Of this insulting Troop, what could she do?
What Hope, what Comfort, what Support were
left?

Spir. She meets not them: but yet, if right I
guess,
A harder Trial on her Virtue waits.

E. Brother. Protect her, Heav'n! but whence this
sad Conjecture?

38 *COMUS*, a Mask.

Spir. This Evening late, by then the chewing
Flocks

Had ta'en their Supper on the savoury Herb
Of Knot-grass Dew-besprent, and were in Fold,
I sat me down to watch upon a Bank
With Ivy canopy'd, and interwove
With flaunting Honeysuckle, and began
Wrapt in a pleasing Fit of Melancholy,
To meditate my rural Minstrelsy,
Till Fancy had her Fill; but e're a Close
The wonted Roar was up amidst the Woods,
And fill'd the Air with barbarous Dissonance,
At which I ceas'd, and listen'd them a-while.

Y. Brother. What follow'd then? O! if our help-
less Sister ———

Spirit. Streight an unusual Stop of sudden Silence
Gave respite to the drowsy frighted Steeds,
That draw the Litter of close-curtain'd Sleep.
At last a soft and solemn breathing Sound
Rose like a Steam of rich distill'd Perfumes,
And stole upon the Air, that ev'n Silence
Was took e're she was 'ware, and wish'd she might
Deny her Nature, and be never more
Still to be so displac'd. I was all Ear,
And took in Strains, that might create a Soul
Under the Ribs of Death———but O! e're long,
Too well I did perceive it was the Voice
Of my most honour'd Lady, your dear Sister.

Y. Brother. O my foreboding Heart! Too true
my Fears. ———

Spirit. Amaz'd I stood, harrow'd with Grief and
Fear,
And O! poor hapless Nightingale, thought I,

How

How sweet thou sing'st, how near the deadly Snare!
Then down the Lawns I ran with headlong Haste,
Thro' Paths, and Turnings often trod by Day,
Till guided by my Ear, I found the Place,
Where the damn'd Wisard, hid in sly Disguise
(For so by certain Signs I knew) had met
Already, e're my best Speed cou'd prevent,
The aidless innocent Lady his wish'd Prey;
Who gently ask'd if he had seen such two,
Supposing him some Neighbour Villager.
Longer I durst not stay; but soon I guess'd
Ye were the two she meant; with that I sprung
Into swift Flight, till I had found you here.
But farther know I not.

Y. Brother. ——— O Night and Shades!
How are ye join'd with Hell in triple Knot
Against the unarm'd Weakness of one Virgin
Alone, and helpless? Is this the Confidence
You gave me, Brother?

E. Brother. Yes; and keep it still,
Lean on it safely; not a Period
Shall be unsaid for me: Against the Threats
Of Malice, or of Sorcery, or that Power
Which erring Men call Chance, this I hold firm,
Virtue may be assail'd, but never hurt,
Surpriz'd by unjust Force, but not enthrall'd;
Yea even that, which Mischief meant most Harm,
Shall in the happy Trial prove most-Glory.
But Evil on itself shall back recoil,
And mix no more with Goodness, when at last
Gather'd like Scum, and settled to itself,
It shall be in eternal restless Change
Self-fed, and self-consumed. If this fail,
The pillar'd Firmament is Rottenness,

And Earth's Base built on Stubble. But come,
let's on;

Against th' opposing Will and Arm of Heav'n
May never this just Sword be lifted up;
But for that damn'd Magician, let him be girt
With all the griev'd Legions that troop
Under the sooty Flag of *Acheron*.

Harpies and *Hydras*, or all the monstrous Forms
'Twixt *Africa* and *Inde*, I'll find him out,
And force him to restore his Purchase back,
Or drag him by the Curls to a foul Death,
Curs'd as his Life.

Spirit. Alas! Good vent'rous Youth,
I love thy Courage yet, and bold Emprise;
But here thy Sword can do thee little Stead,
Far other Arms, and other Weapons must
Be those, that quell the Might of hellish Charms.
He with his bare Wand can unthread thy Joints,
And crumble all thy Sinews.

E. Brother. Why prithee, Shepherd,
How durst thou then thyself approach so near
As to make this Relation?

Spirit. A Shepherd Lad,
Of small Regard to see to, yet well skill'd
In ev'ry virtuous Plant, and healing Herb,
That spreads her verdant Leaf to th' Morning Ray;
Has shewn me Simples of a thousand Names,
Telling their strange and vigorous Faculties.
Amongst the rest a small unsightly Root,
But of divine Effect, he cull'd me out;
And bade me keep it as of sovereign Use
'Gainst all Enchantment, Mildew, Blast, or Damp,
Or ghastly Fury's Apparition.

I purs'd

COMUS, a Mask.

41

I purs'd it up. If you have this about you
(As I will give you when you go) you may
Boldly assault the Necromancer's Hall;
Where if he be, with dauntless Hardyhood,
And brandish'd Blade rush on him, break his Glafs,
And shed the luscious Liquor on the Ground;
But seize his Wand, tho' he, and his curs'd Crew
Fierce Sign of Battle make, and menace high.
Or like the Sons of *Vulcan*, vomit Smoak,
Yet will they soon retire if he but shrink.

E. Brother. Thyrsis, lead on a-pace, I'll follow
thee,
And some good Angel bear a Shield before us.

End of the Second Act.



A C T



A C T III.

S C E N E opens, and discovers a magnificent Hall in Comus's Palace, set off with all the gay Decorations proper for an ancient Banqueting Room. Comus and Attendants stand on each Side of the Lady, who is seated in an enchanted Chair; and by her Looks and Gestures expresses great Signs of Uneasiness and Melancholy.

Comus speaks.

HENCE, loathed Melancholy,
 Of Cerberus, and blackest Midnight born,
 In Stygian Cave forlorn,
 'Mongst horrid Shapes, and Shrieks, and Sights unholy,
 Find out some uncouth Cell,
 Where brooding Darknefs spreads his jealous Wings,
 And the Night-Raven sings;

There,

COMUS, a Mask. 43

There, under Ebon-Shades, and low-brow'd Rocks,
As ragged as thy Locks,
In dark *Cimmerian* Defart ever dwell.
But come, thou Goddess, fair and free,
In Heav'n ycleap'd *Euphrosyne*;
And by Men heart-easing Mirth,
Whom lovely *Venus* at a Birth
With two Sister Graces more,
To Ivy-crowned *Bacchus* bore.
Haste thee, Nymph, and bring with thee
Jest and youthful Jollity,
Quips and Cranks, and wanton Wiles,
Nods, and Becks, and wreathed Smiles,
Such as hang on *Hebe's* Cheek,
And love to live in dimple sleek,
Sport, that wrinkled Care derides,
And Laughter holding both his Sides.
Come, and trip it as you go
On the light fantastick Toe.

*While these Lines are repeating, enter a Nymph,
representing Euphrosyne, or Mirth; who
advances to the Lady, and sings the follow-
ing Song.*

SONG.

S O N G.

I.

C O M E, come, bid Adieu to Fear,
Love and Harmony live here.

No domestick jealous Fars,
Buzzing Slanders, wordy Wars,
In my Presence will appear,
Love and Harmony reign here.

II.

Sighs to amorous Sighs returning,
Pulses beating, Bosoms burning,
Bosoms with warm Wishes panting,
Words to speak those Wishes wanting,
Are the only Tumults here,
All the Woes you need to fear,
Love and Harmony reign here.

Lady. How long must I, by magick Fetters chain'd
To this detested Seat, hear odious Strains
Of shameless Folly, which my Soul abhors.

Com. Ye Sedge-crown'd Naiades by Twilight seen,
Along Meander's mazy Border green,
At Cymus' Call appear in all your azure Sheen.

*He waves his Wand, the Naiades enter and
range themselves in order to dance.*

Now

Now softly flow let *Lydian Measures* move,
 And breathe the pleasing Pangs of gentle Love.
 In swimming Dance on Air's soft Billows float,
 Soft swell your Bosoms with the swelling Note ;
 With pliant Arm in graceful Motion vie,
 Now sunk with Ease, with Ease now lifted high ;
 Till lively Gesture each fond Care reveal;
 That Musick can express, or Passion feel.

*The Naiads dance a slow Dance agreeable
 to the Subject of the preceding Lines, and
 expressive of the Passion of Love.*

*After this Dance the Pastoral Nymph advances
 slow, with a melancholy and desponding
 Air, to the side of the Stage, and repeats
 by way of Soliloquy the first six Lines,
 and then sings the Ballad. In the mean
 Time she is observ'd by Euphrosyne,
 who by her Gesture expresses to the Audi-
 ence her different Sentiments of the Sub-
 ject of her Complaint, suitably to the Cha-
 racter of their several Songs.*

RECITATIVO.

*How gentle was my Damon's Air !
 Like sunny Beams his golden Hair,
 His Voice was like the Nightingale's
 More sweet his Breath than flow'ry Vales:
 How hard such Beauties to resign !
 And yet that cruel Task is mine !*

A BALLAD.

I.

O N every Hill, in every Grove,
 Along the Margin of each Stream,
 Dear conscious Scenes of former Love,
 I mourn, and Damon is my Theme.
 The Hills, the Groves, the Streams remain,
 But Damon there I seek in vain.

II.

Now to the mossy Cave I fly,
 Where to my Swain I oft have sung,
 Well pleas'd the browsing Goats to spy,
 As o'er the airy Steep they hung.
 The mossy Cave, the Goats remain,
 But Damon there I seek in vain.

III.

Now thro' the rambling Vale I pass,
 And sigh to see the well-known Shade,
 I weep, and kiss the bended Grass,
 Where Love and Damon fondly play'd.
 The Vale, the Shade, the Grass remain,
 But Damon there I seek in vain.

IV.

IV.

*From Hill, from Dale, each Charm is fled,
 Groves, Flocks and Fountains please no more,
 Each Flower in Pity droops it's Head,
 All Nature does my Loss deplore.
 All, all reproach the faithless Swain,
 Yet Damon still I seek in vain.*

RECITATIVO. By Euphrosyne.

*Love, the greatest Bliss below,
 How to taste few Women know,
 Fewer still the Way have hit
 How a fickle Swain to quit.
 Simple Nymph, then learn of me,
 How to treat Inconstancy.*

BALLAD.

I.

TH E wanton God, that pierces Hearts,
 Dips in Gall his pointed Darts,
 But the Nymph disdains to pine,
 Who bathes the Wound with rosy Wine.

II.

*Farewel Lovers, when they're cloy'd ;
If I am scorn'd, because enjoy'd,
Sure the squeamish Fops are free
To rid me of dull Company.*

III.

*They have Charms, whilst mine can please ;
I love thee much, but more my Ease ;
Nor jealous Fears my Love molest,
Nor Faithless Vows shall break my Rest.*

IV.

*Why shou'd they e'er give me Pain,
Who to give me Joy disdain ?
All I hope of mortal Man,
Is to love me—whilst he can.*

Comus Speaks.

*Cast thine Eyes around, and see,
How from every Element
Nature's Sweets are cull'd for thee,
And her choicest Blessings sent.*

Fire,

Fire, Water, Earth, and Air combine
 To compose the rich Repast,
 Their Aid the distant Seasons join,
 To court thy Smell, thy Sight, thy Taste.
 Hither Summer, Autumn, Spring,
 Hither all your Tributes bring.

After this they put on their Chaplets, and prepare for the Feast; while Comus is advancing with his Cup, and one of his Attendants offers a Chaplet to the Lady, which she throws on the Ground with Indignation, the Preparation for the Feast is interrupted by lofty and solemn Musick from above, whence the second Attendant Spirit descends gradually in a splendid Machine, repeating the following Lines.

Second Spirit Speaks.

From the Realms of Peace above,
 From the Source of heav'nly Love,
 From the starry Throne of Jove,
 Where tuneful Muses in a glittering Ring
 To the celestial Lyre's eternal String,
 Patient Virtue's Triumph sing,
 To these dim Labyrinths where Mortals stray,
 Maz'd in Passion's pathless Way
 To save thy purer Breast from Spot and Blame,
 Thy Guardian Spirit came.

He advances to the Lady, and sings, remaining still invisible to Comus and his Crew, but heard by them with some Concern, which they endeavoured to dissemble.

S O N G.

I.

NOR on the Beds of fading Flowers,
 Shedding soon their gaudy Pride,
 Nor with Swains in Syren Bowers,
 Will true Pleasure long reside.

II.

On awful Virtue's Hill sublime,
 Enthroned sits th' Immortal Fair;
 Who wins her Height, must patient climb,
 The Steps are Peril, Toil, and Care.

So from the First did Jove ordain,
 Eternal Bliss for transient Pain.

COMUS, a Mask. 51

The Spirit reascends, the Musick playing loud and solemn.

Lady. Thanks, heav'nly Songster ! Whosoe'er thou art,

Who deign'st to enter these unhallow'd Walls,
To bring the Song of Virtue to mine Ear !
O cease not, cease not the melodious Strain,
Till my wrapt Soul high on the swelling Note
To Heav'n ascend—far from these horrid Fiends !

Com. Mere airy Dreams of Air-bred People
these !

Who look with Envy on more happy Man,
And wou'd decry the Joys they cannot taste.
Quit not the Substance for a stalking Shade
Of hollow Virtue, which eludes the Grasp.
Drink this, and you will scorn such idle Tales.

*[He offers the Cup, which she puts
by, and offers to rise.]*

Nay, Lady, fit ; if I but wave this Wand,
Your Nerves are all bound up in Alabaster,
And you a Statue, or, as *Daphne* was,
Root-bound, that fled *Apollo*.

Lad. Fool, do not boast ;

Thou can'st not touch the Freedom of my Mind
With all thy Charms, altho' this corp'ral Rind
Thou hast immanacl'd, while Heav'n sees good.

52 C O M U S, a Mask.

Com. Why are you vex'd, Lady? why do you frown?

Here dwell no Frowns nor Anger; from these Gates
Sorrow flies far. See, here be all the Pleasures
That Fancy can beget on youthful Thoughts,
When the fresh Blood grows lively, and returns
Brisk as the *April* Buds in Primrose Season.
And first behold this cordial Julap here,
That flames and dances in his Crystal Bounds,
With Spirits of Balm and fragrant Syrups mix'd.
Not that *Nepenthes*, which the Wife of *Thone*
In *Aegypt* gave to *Jove* born *Helena*,
Is of such Pow'r to stir up Joy, as this,
To Life so friendly, or so cool to Thirst.

Lady. Know, base Deluder, that I will not taste it.

Keep thy detested Gifts for such as these.

[Points to his Crew.

Com. Why shou'd you be so cruel to yourself,
And to those dainty Limbs, which Nature lent
For gentle Usage and soft Delicacy?
But you invert the Cov'nants of her Trust,
And harshly deal, like an ill Borrower,
With that which you receiv'd on other Terms;
Scorning the unexempt Condition,
By which all human Frailty must subsist,
Refreshment after Toil, Ease after Pain;
That have been tir'd all Day without Repast,
And timely Rest have wanted. But, fair Virgin,
This will restore all soon.

§

Lady

Lady. 'Twill not, false Traitor!

'Twill not restore the Truth and Honesty,
That thou hast banish'd from thy Tongue with Lies.
Was this the Cottage, and the safe Abode
Thou told'st me of? Hence with thy brew'd En-
chantments.

Hast thou betray'd my credulous Innocence
With vizor'd Falshood and base Forgery?
And would'st thou seek again to trap me here
With lick'rish Baits, fit to ensnare a Brute?
Were it a Draught for *Juno* when she banquets,
I wou'd not taste thy treas'nous Offer—None
But such as are good Men can give good things;
And that, which is not good, is not delicious
To a well-govern'd and wise Appetite.

Com. O, Foolishness of Men! that lend their Ear
To those budge Doctors of the *Stoick* Fur,
And fetch their Precepts from the *Cynick* Tub,
Praising the lean and fallow Abstinence.
Wherefore did Nature pour her Bounties forth
With such a full and unwithdrawing Hand,
Cov'ring the Earth with Odours, Fruits, and Flocks,
Thronging the Seas with Spawn innumerable,
But all to please and sate the curious Taste?
And set to work Millions of spinning Worms,
That in their green Shops wave the smooth-hair'd
Silk,

To deck her Sons; and, that no Corner might
Be vacant of her Plenty, in her own Loins
She hutch'd th' all-worship'd Ore, and precious Gems
To store her Children with. If all the World
Should in a Pet of Temp'rance feed on Pulse,
Drink the clear Stream, and nothing wear but Frize,
Th' All-giver wou'd be unthank'd, wou'd be unprais'd,

54 C O M U S, a Mask.

Not half his Riches known, and yet despis'd,
And we should serve him as a grudging Master,
As a penurious Niggard of his Wealth,
And live like Nature's Bastards, not her Sons ;
Who wou'd be quite furcharg'd with her own Weight,
And strangled with her waste Fertility.

Lady. I had not thought to have unlock'd my Lips
In this unhallow'd Air, but that this Juggler
Wou'd think to charm my Judgment, as mine Eyes,
Obtruding false Rules, pranck'd in Reason's Garb.
I hate when Vice can bolt her Arguments,
And Virtue has no Tongue to check her Pride.
Impostor, do not charge most innocent Nature,
As if she would her Children shou'd be riotous
With her Abundance. She, good Caterefs,
Means her Provision only to the good,
That live according to her sober Laws,
And holy Dictate of spare Temperance.
If ev'ry just Man, that now pines with Want,
Had but a mod'rate and befeeming Share
Of that which lewdly-pamper'd Luxury
Now heaps upon some few with vast Excess,
Nature's full Blessings wou'd be well dispens'd
In unsuperfluous even Proportion ;
And she no whiten cumber'd with her Store.
And then the Giver wou'd be better thank'd,
His Praise due paid : For swinish Gluttony
Ne'er looks to Heav'n amid'st his gorgeous Feast,
But with besotted base Ingratitude
Crams, and blasphemes his Feeder. Shall I go on ?
Or have I said enough ?

Com. Enough to shew
That you are cheated by the lying Boasts

Of

Of starving Pedants, that affect a Fame
From scorning Pleasures which they cannot reach.

Euphrosyne *sings*.

I.

PREACH not me your musty Rules,
Ye Drones, that mould in idle Cell;
The Heart is wiser than the Schools,
The Senses always reason well.

II.

*If short my Span, I less can spare
To pass a single Pleasure by;
An Hour is long, if lost in Care,
They only live, who Life enjoy.*

Com. These are the Maxims of the truly Wise;
Of such as practise what they preach to others.
Here are no Hypocrites, no grave Dissemblers;
Nor pining Grief, nor eating Cares approach us,
Nor Sighs, nor Murmurs—but of gentle Love,
Whose Woes delight. What must his Pleasures then?

Euphrosyne sings.

YE Fauns and ye Dryads, from Hill, Dale, and
Grove,

Trip, trip it along, conducted by Love;

Swiftly resort to Comus' gay Court,

And in various Measures shew Love's various Sport.

Enter the Fauns and Dryads, and attend to the following Directions. The Tune is play'd a second time, to which they dance.

NOW lighter and gayer, ye tinkling Strings,
sound;

Light, light in the Air, ye nimble Nymphs, bound.

Now, now with quick Feet the Ground beat, beat, beat,

Now, now with quick Feet the Ground beat, beat, beat,

&c.

Now cold and denying,

Now kind and complying,

Disdaining, complaining,

Consenting, repenting,

Indifference now feigning.

Again with quick Feet the Ground beat, beat beat.

[Exeunt Dancers.]

Com.

Com. Lift, Lady, be not coy, and be not cozen'd
 With that same vaunted Name *Virginity*.
 Beauty is Nature's Coin, must not be hoarded,
 But must be current ; and the Good thereof
 Consists in mutual and partaken Bliss,
 Unfavoury in th' Enjoyment of itself ;
 If you let slip Time, like a neglected Rose,
 It withers on the Stalk with languish'd Head.
 Beauty is Nature's Brag, and must be shown
 In Courts, at Feasts, and high Solemnities,
 Where most may wonder at the Workmanship.
 It is for homely Features to keep Home,
 They had their Name from thence. Coarse Complexions,
 And Cheeks of sorry Grain, will serve to ply
 The Sampler, and to teize the Housewife's Wool.
 What need a Vermil-tinctur'd Lip for that,
 Love-darting Eyes, or Tresses like the Morn ?
 There was another Meaning in these Gifts ;
 Think what, and be advis'd ; you are but young
 yet,
 This will inform you soon.

Lady. To him that dares
 Arm his prophane Tongue with contemptuous
 Words,
 Against the Sun-clad Power of Chastity,
 Fain wou'd I something say, yet to what purpose ?
 Thou hast nor Ear, nor Soul to apprehend ;
 And thou art worthy that thou should'st not know
 More Happiness than this thy present Lot ;
 Enjoy your dear Wit, and gay Rhetorick,
 That has so well been taught her dazling Fence,

Thou

Thou art not fit to hear thyself convinc'd ;
 Yet shou'd I try, the uncontrouled Worth
 Of this pure Cause wou'd kindle my rapt Spirits.
 To such a Flame of sacred Vehemence,
 That dumb Things wou'd be mov'd to sympathize,
 And the brute Earth wou'd lend her Nerves and
 shake,

Till all thy magick Structures, rear'd so high,
 Were shatter'd into Heaps o'er thy false Head.

Com. She fables not, I feel that I do fear
 Her Words set off by some superior Power ;
 And tho' not mortal, yet a cold shuddering Dew
 Dips me all o'er, as when the Wrath of *Jove*
 Speaks Thunder and the Chains of *Erebus*
 To some of *Saturn's* Crew. I must dissemble,
 And try her yet more strongly—Come, no more,
 This is meer moral Bable, and direct
 Against the Canon Laws of our Foundation ;
 I must not suffer this, yet 'tis but the Lees
 And Settlings of a melancholy Blood ;
 But this will cure all streight, one Sip of this
 Will bathe the drooping Spirits in Delight,
 Beyond the Bliss of Dreams. Be wise and taste.

*The Brothers rush in with Swords drawn, wrest
 the Glass out of his Hand, and break it against
 the Ground ; his Rout make Sign of Resistance,
 but are all driven off.*

Enter

Enter 1st Spirit.

What, have you let the false Enchanter 'scape?
O! ye mistook, you shou'd have snatch'd his Wand,
And bound him fast; without his Rod revers'd,
And backward Mutters of dis severing Power,
We cannot free the Lady, that sits here
In stony Fetters fix'd, and motionless.
Yet stay, be not disturb'd; now I bethink me,
Some other Means I have, which may be us'd,
Which once of *Melibæus* old I learn'd,
The soothest Shepherd that e'er pip'd on Plains,
I learn'd 'em then when with my Fellow Swain,
The youthful *Lycidas* his Flocks I fed.

There is a gentle Nymph, not far from hence,
That with moist Curb sways the smooth *Severn*
Stream,

Sabrina is her Name, a Virgin pure:
And, as the old Swain said, she can unlock
The clasping Charm, and thaw the numbing Spell,
If she be right invok'd in warbled Song;
For Maidenhood she loves, and will be swift
To aid a Virgin, such as was herself:
And see, the Swain himself in Season comes.

Enter 2d and 3d Spirit.

Haste, *Lycidas*, and try the tuneful Strain,
Which from her Bed the fair *Sabrina* calls.

SONG.

SONG. *By the 3d Spirit.*

SABRINA fair,
Listen where thou art sitting
Under the glassy, cool, translucent Wave,
In twisted Braids of Lillies knitting
The loose Train of thy Amber-dropping Hair ;
Listen for dear Honour's sake,
Goddess of the silver Lake,
Listen and save.

Sabrina rises attended by Water Nymphs.

S O N G.

Sab. **B***y the rusky-fringed Bank,*
Where grows the Willow and the Osier
dank,
My sliding Chariot stays,
Thick-set with Agat, and the azure Sheen
Of Turkish blue, and Em'rald green,
That in the Channel strays,
Whilst from off the Waters fleet
Thus I set my printless Feet,

O'er

COMUS, a Mask;

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*O'er the Cowslip's velvet Head,
That bends not as I tread,
Gentle Swain, at thy request,
I am here.*

RECITATIVO;

3d Spir. *Goddeſs dear,
We implore thy powerful Hand
To undo the charmed Band
Of true Virgin here diſtreſs'd,
Thro' the Force and thro' the Wile,
Of unbleſs'd Enchanter vile.*

RECITATIVO;

Sab. *Shepherd, 'tis my Office beſt
To help enſnared Chſtity :
Brighteſt Lady, look on me ;
Thus I ſprinkle on thy Breſt
Drops, that from my Fountain purd
I have kept of precious Cure ;
Thrice upon thy Finger's Tip,
Thrice upon thy ruby'd Lip ;
Next this marble venom'd Seat,
Smear'd with Gums of glytinous Heat;*

O'er

O'er

*I touch with chaste Palms moist and cold :
Now the Spell hath lost his hold,
And I must haste, e're Morning-Hour,
To wait in Amphitrite's Bower.*

*Sabrina descends, and the Lady rises out of her Seat ;
the Brothers embrace her tenderly.*

E. Brother. I oft had heard, but ne'er believ'd till
now,

There are, who can by potent magick Spells
Bend to their crooked Purpose Natures's Laws,
Blot the fair Moon from her resplendent Orb,
Bid whirling Planets stop their destin'd Course,
And thro' the yawning Earth from *Stygian* Gloom
Call up the meagre Ghost to Walks of Light :
It may be so, — for some mysterious End !
Yet still the Freedom of the Mind, you see,
No Spell can reach ; That righteous *Jove* forbids,
Lest Man should call his frail Divinity
The Slave of Evil, or the Sport of Chance.

Y. Brother. Why did I doubt ? Why tempt the
Wrath of Heaven

To shed just Vengeance on my weak Distrust ?
Here spotless Innocence has found Relief,
By Means as wond'rous as her strange Distress.
Inform us, *Thyrsis*, if for this thine Aid
We aught can pay, that equals thy Desert ?

1st Spirit. Pay it to Heaven, that lent you Grace
To escape this cursed Place ;
To Heaven, that here has try your Youth,
Your Faith, your Patience, and your Truth,
And sent you thro' these hard Essays

With

COMUS, a Mask. 63

With a Crown of Deathless Praise,
To triumph in victorious Dance
O'er sensual Folly and Intemperance.

Then the two first Spirits advance and speak alternately the following Lines, which Milton calls Epiloguizing.

To the Ocean now I fly,
And those happy Climes that lye
Where Day never shuts his Eye,
Up in the broad Fields of the Sky :
There I suck the liquid Air,
All amidst the Gardens fair
Of *Hesperus*, and his Daughters three,
That sing about the Golden Tree.

Along the crisped Shades and Bowers
Revels the spruce and jocund Spring,
The Graces and the rosy-bosom'd Hours
Thither all their Bounties bring ;
There eternal Summer dwells,
And West-winds with musky Wing
About the Cedar'n Alleys fling
Nard and *Cassia's* balmy Smells.

Now my Task is smoothly done,
I can fly, or I can run
Quickly to the green Earth's End,
Where the bow'd Welkin flow doth bend ;
And from thence can soar as soon
To the Corners of the Moon.

Mortals,

64 COMUS, a Mask.

Mortals that would follow me,
Love Virtue, she alone is free ;
She can teach you how to climb
Higher than the sphery Chime ;
Or, if Virtue feeble were,
Heaven itself would stoop to her.

CHORUS.

*Taught by Virtue you may climb
Higher than the sphery Chime ;
Or, if Virtue feeble were,
Heaven itself would stoop to her.*



FINIS.

